

Making Real Magic



Richard Osterlind

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Osterlind
MYSTERIES

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Dedication

Although I only mention my wife, Lisa, once in this book, she is on every page. I want to thank her for being just what she is.

She is the reason I know the meaning of Real Magic.

I also want to thank my dear friend, Jim Sisti. His input on the ideas in this book have been as valuable to me as his friendship.

Preface

For every book I write, I write ten. Each morning, I sit down to type out the material and every night, I erase most of it. Somewhere around the tenth re-write, I get it to where I like it.

One of the biggest problems I had when writing *Making Real Magic* was to keep the same flavor and feeling of *Making Magic Real*. I found myself repeatedly writing in a style that wasn't really me. It took months to realize I needed to follow Harry Lorayne's example and just write like I talk. That is what I did with *Making Magic Real*. That is what I finally did here.

These thoughts and ideas were learned over a process of some forty years. Many were not even realized until I finally sat down at the computer and analyzed why I do what I do. Rest assured that little came about by instinct and most of what you are about to read was only learned after I was a miserable failure time and time again. I can remember trying to understand what happened and what I needed to change so many times in the past after a disaster. Persistence pays off and it is only because I got up and dusted myself off that I was able to learn from my mistakes.

This book is not just about magic, but about life. Many of the problems we face with magic are the same we encounter in other endeavors. That is the wonderful thing about magic—its study and its performance. Please bear this in mind as you read and consider other applications where these principles might apply.

More than anything else, for better or worse, this book is meant to show you the way I think. I draw my inspiration from some very unusual places. One minute I may be mentioning something from a book, the next I might be talking about a popular movie. I am a great believer in gaining knowledge from unlikely sources. I am always on the lookout for some new bit of wisdom or information.

One point I have to stress is the ideas in this book are my opinions only. Many go against conventional magic thinking. I apologize right here and now for offending anyone whose convictions I may be at odds with. You also have to remember what works for me is because of who I am and the kind of personality I have. The important thing is to get you thinking. If I can get you to scrutinize your own ideas about magic and see how they stack up with mine, I will be happy.

Please enjoy the following pages with the thought that I want only the best for everyone!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Billy Gold". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large, sweeping initial "B" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Falmouth, KY
January 2004



i.

Magic as an Art

I firmly believe magic is an art. It is a fine art. It is due all the respect and study that any art deserves. I also believe the obligation of a magician is to create a sense of mystery, wonder and excitement that takes his audience to a special place where the impossible becomes possible and dreams become reality. It is a place where feelings of joy, happiness and innocence, rivaling that of childhood, are born.

To do less is to do puzzles. Some puzzles may be wonderful, but they are not magic. They do not create a sense of astonishment that is inherent in legerdemain. To carry it further, instead of entertainment, many puzzles only irritate the viewer and cause exasperation. The only relief a puzzle has is when the spectator learns the secret either by his own wits (the best feeling) or by being told the solution. If a magician's audience resents his performance, there is a good chance he is just doing puzzles. When no solution is offered, the audience will only feel indignation towards him and his show. He will be regarded as a deceiving trickster who simply has not shared his secrets. He is not a magician.

We cannot become true magicians without understanding what we are trying to accomplish. We must understand what magic is and we must understand what art is. We can only progress if we have a firm foundation on which to build on. Only then, if we are diligent, can we hope to become artists ourselves.

In the monumental book *Our Magic* by Maskelyne and Devant we read: "From the time of Aristotle to the present date, the consensus of authorities has decided that all art is based upon imitation. Most of the authorities have 'flown off the handle' in trying to decide what

constitutes art in the abstract; but all agree that the basis of art is imitation - either the imitation of something that actually exists or of something that *might* exist in circumstances imagined by the artist.”

Please look again at that last line: “...either the imitation of something that *actually* exists or of something that *might* exist in circumstances imagined by the artist.” Most magicians try to imagine what real magic would look like, then try to create the illusion of that. That fits the *second* definition. I contend that this is not the place to begin. Before we can create magic that *might* exist in our imagination, we need to examine what has *actually* been written about magic through the annals of time.

A good place to start is the beginning of Hilliard’s *Greater Magic* in a small chapter called “Pageant.” If you have the book, please read it. The “pageant” is a procession of miracle men. It is interesting to note that the mixture runs through the entire gamut of religious to sacrilegious, inspired or corrupted. Great men of the Bible are mentioned such as the prophet Aaron and Joseph of the “coat of many colors” along with such nefarious men as Nostradamus and the Elizabethan Dr. Dee. Merlin and Signor Hocus-Pocus are there alongside Pythagoras and Albertus Magnus. The mixture is quite incredible. Whether they are fictional or historical, good or evil, they are marching along.

Likewise, in Volume One of *The Tarbell Course in Magic*, the first chapter is entitled, “The History of Magic.” Dr. Tarbell also talks of miracles in the Bible then moves on to Zoroaster, the gods of Greece and Rome, and on down to our present age. (Some of the comments about Christianity might almost seem sacrilegious to some.) He shows the ties of modern science to ancient magic and talks about the “enlightenment of modern civilization.” He, like Hilliard, makes it clear that our present art has its origins in the magic of the past.

It is important for us to remember this heritage and is essential in understanding the power magicians are supposed to possess. We must constantly remind ourselves that magicians are very special people who do incredible deeds!



ii.

The Nature of Magic

Mentioning the heritage of magic in the previous chapter might have made some of you feel uneasy. You may have been thinking that I am missing the point entirely. Magic is an *entertainment art*. Most audiences know, of course, you are only *pretending* to be a real magician. That is true, but let me ask you this. How often has an audience member asked you, “Could you change my one dollar bill into a hundred?” or “Can you tell me what tomorrow’s winning lottery number will be?” or “Can you make my wife disappear?” These trivial remarks meant as silly jokes still imply, “If you are a magician, do something that’s useful!”

On a very deep emotional level, audiences expect your *imitation* of real magic to have some of the *meaning* of real magic. Miracles of the past were always used to *accomplish something* - not for just *showing off*! Spectators want to give the magician *power* that many don’t want themselves. The lay audience understands the underlying *charm* of magic that many of today’s magicians have done their best to forget!

I have always tried to keep my instinctive feelings about the power of magic intact. My own style of working takes advantage of this principle. As an example, whenever I do an effect with playing cards, I attempt to use some type of gambling theme. I want people to believe that if they had the power I am demonstrating, they could walk into a casino and walk out rich!

Usually, the audience will do this automatically. How often has someone said to you, “I wouldn’t want to play cards with you!” even if all you did was an Ambitious Card routine or Card to Wallet effect? You don’t even need to perform a gambling routine for someone to suggest you could win at cards. Doesn’t that tell you something?

In my work as a mentalist, I encounter questions of this type all the time. "What stocks should I buy?" "Who will I marry?" "Can you come to the racetrack with me?" It should not surprise us that people do this. It is only because we have bottlenecked ourselves in our magic books, magic clubs and conventions that we forget where the spectators' state of mind lies. They do not know the secrets (hopefully!) You are doing impossible things. Why shouldn't you turn your powers towards something useful? Children instinctively think this way. Have you ever had a child say, "Can you make my teacher disappear?"

An odd corollary to this direction of thinking is the complaint I often see lodged against mentalists by magicians. They often say, "Mentalism is too strong and such performers are wrong for leading their audiences into thinking they really have special powers." They are missing the point entirely.

Go back to the references noted in the first chapter and take a look at how many famous men of magic really did what we would call mentalism! Interpreting dreams, foretelling the future, knowing people's hearts, etc. These are common themes since the beginning of time. Whether it is the Bible's Daniel foretelling the future, magi following a star, Nostradamus making predictions of current times or wise men knowing the thoughts of men, these are certainly common themes for the mentalist. If you research both religious and secular literature, you will find this kind of magic to be the most common of all.

It is easy for the spectator to make the short jump to see the benefit of these powers. If, on the other hand, you change a red silk into a green one, it is a bit harder for your audience to find a practical application. It is a *show off* kind of thing. If your audience would like to learn to do it themselves and also show off, that is fine. You will have their interest. If not, they will think, "*So who cares?*" Yes, you may receive credit for being a clever guy or good with your hands, but that brings the interest to *you* instead of *them*! It is much better when you can get them absorbed and still get the applause!

People read books about things that interest them. They go to movies to see the kind of action they find attractive. Quite often, they like to put themselves into the hero's shoes. They like to think they have the same kind of qualities of the star of the book or movie. Likewise, when you perform your audience should think, "*Isn't that won-*

derful! How I would love to have those powers! Think of what I could do in life if I were that kind of magician!" If you can accomplish that, you will certainly be well received.

Personally, I have some definite thoughts about what my audience thinks of my *powers*. You should know that I never make any claims. I tell my audiences I accomplish everything in my show using everyday abilities we all have. (There will be much more about this topic later.) Still they are enthralled. I believe the *means* of the effect are not nearly as important as the *ends*. I believe the audience is thinking, *"I don't care even if it was some sort of trick, I would love to be able to know what people are thinking!"*

On a related note, I am sure many people believe if David Copperfield were in their own living room, he would be able to float and do his other miracles! Not that they believe that he has some kind of supernatural power, but rather that he is a good enough magician, and clever enough, to be able to get whatever equipment (or stuff) secretly in there to be able to do it.

People want to believe magicians are special and can do things that non-magicians cannot. Audiences are more than willing to go to a fantasyland with you if you will just let them. Please let them!



iii.

Personalizing Magic

Magic books often discuss how we can personalize magic. As already stated, mental magic is often cited as a perfect example because the magician or mentalist uses the actual thoughts of the spectator. What can be more personal than that? Doing magic in the spectator's hands is another way the literature tells us will make our magic more personal and stronger. Both of these ideas are surely valid, but there are many more.

Hitting a *theme* that interests your audience will also make your magic special. If you do something that demonstrates a power the audience would like to have, they will be spellbound. I have already discussed those qualities in mentalism, but here are a few others. Everyone would love to have a fantastic memory. Demonstrating such a quality, such as the *Amazing Memory Act*, can really hit home. Who wouldn't benefit with this ability and want to have a "photographic" mind?

Even though most people are not thieves (at least I would like to think so!), most do become enthralled with watching a professional pickpocket work. It is a quality that can achieve *results*. Since it is done for fun, it is harmless, but on a deeper level, it represents a *useful* ability.

An escape artist, likewise, demonstrates a remarkable ability. Most of us will never be behind bars, but it is a stimulating thought to know that if you ever found yourself locked up in some way, through some evil designs, you could escape and walk away freely just like a modern day Houdini! The person, who has any of these abilities, has *power*.

There are less dramatic ways to personalize magic. One way is as

simple as using a borrowed object. Ring Flight is a perfect example. In reality it is nothing more than a transportation effect such as Card to Pocket, yet it carries much more power with it. The borrowed ring may have been a gift from a loved one and generating highly emotional feelings for that person. The ring may have great value and be one of the spectator's most treasured possessions. To see it suddenly vanish will instill much more emotion than a simple playing card (even if the card was signed.)

Linking three borrowed finger rings is also much more effective than linking three large metal rings that the magician supplies. Performers forget that from the audience's viewpoint, the borrowed rings appear to be *altered* in some way that might cause damage. (I will talk more about the magician/audience point of view later on.)

With a little thought, many standard magical effects can be changed to make them more meaningful. Substituting a borrowed credit card for a playing card in many card tricks can add a whole new dimension. To have your signed Ace of Spades disappear is OK, but when your platinum American Express card dissolves away into thin air, the ramifications are a lot greater.

Let me interject a small balancing thought here. A magic performance should be made up of many different elements. There are times when a simple effect for a bit of light amusement is perfect. Not everything you do can or should try to be earth shattering. But, real art demands a response. There are also times when deep drama is the appropriate goal. We must have variety. Contrast is very important in any art and it is only through contrast that we achieve the highest emotional response.

There are no black and white areas in either magic or life. We all live in a world of grey. I am not trying to prove that every trick or effect you perform must capture the audience's deepest interest, but I am trying to show that if you can occasionally do this, you will make your performance much stronger. As a magician you should be a master of your art. It should appear that if you suddenly feel an urge for a tidbit of magical whimsy, you could pop in a bit of *show-off* type fun.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf was famous for his fireworks. In the *Harry Potter* series, there is a lot of magic used just for playfulness. But, when the evil turns up in either of these two series, the

magic turns to power and has meaning. A person will wonder and delight for over two hours of miracles in a David Copperfield performance but chances are, they will walk away remembering such emotional effects such as Snow and Flying. Take your example from proven and tried formulas.



iv.

How Can Magic Be Real?

The closer we come to instilling the essence of what mankind has always thought magic to be into our craft, the more we approach true art. That, however, brings up a negative issue in our discussion that many magicians may not be consciously aware of or would like to avoid. I am talking about *guilt*! The guilt from knowing that you are only *pretending* to do real magic. The guilt that you are *deceiving* your audience. I am certain more magicians suffer from these feelings than would like to admit it. You can see it in their actions and in what they say. You can see it in their attitude and demeanor. To illustrate my point, let me give you an example of what a magician might *think* when he does a simple trick.

“Wow! I can’t believe that trick fooled them so bad. It was so easy to do that, anyone could do it if they knew how. Listen to their applause and look at how they are looking at me. They are giving me too much credit for what I did! I hardly did anything. I am starting to feel ashamed of myself for making them believe I am so special. I don’t deserve this kind of praise. I am an honest person and now I feel like a liar!”

Truthfully examine your conscience to see if you have ever felt that way. Explore the symptoms of this kind of belief system. Do you attempt to learn difficult sleight of hand because it makes you feel like you are *earning* your acceptance? Do you construct elaborate routines so you will feel you are doing some real *work* when you perform? Do you tell a lot of jokes and one-liners so that you can justify your magic by entertaining your audience with laughter besides or instead of real mystery? Hopefully, you do not, but there are many magicians who do.

True art doesn't have to rely on difficulty or complexity. It only has to move and instill emotion. It must *feed the soul*. A great trumpet solo is not measured by how many notes the musician played. The quality of a painting is not measured by how many colors the artist used. Mozart wrote simple melodic lines that will live on forever. Picasso created masterpieces using elementary colors and brush strokes. What makes magic an art is not determined by how long the magician worked on perfecting the Pass or the complex maneuvers of a coin routine. It is only determined by the magic he creates for his audience and himself.

Likewise, comedy is a wonderful thing. What would a magic show be without laughter? Comedy, however, should never be used just to help weak magic get by. You would hardly say a schoolteacher, who constantly tells jokes but can't teach, is a good teacher.

Finally, listen to the way magicians will complain when a fellow performer doing basic effects makes it big in a TV special. Instead of being delighted that magic is in the spotlight and his performance is so effective, they complain he is doing *off-the-shelf* magic and there is nothing special or original about him. They completely disregard his showmanship and ability to mystify. It is jealousy, pure and simple.

These kinds of embittered feelings lead to far greater damage than words alone. The recent exposure shows on national television only happened through the conspiracy of some magicians whose only way to obtain the spotlight was to betray some of magic's secrets. Worse yet, they betrayed what real magic is all about. The guilt feelings I am talking about cut right to the core of magic. Many performers can't ever purge themselves of the feeling that magic is a deceptive endeavor. They will say they do *illusions* rather than tricks in an attempt to feel better. They will quote lines such as "we are simply *actors* playing the role of a magician" in order to excuse their behavior. But deep down, they believe they are lying and have to compensate in some way. This is not the way to find the art of magic and the problem has to be faced.



v.

Tom Bombadil

When I first began to write the manuscript *Making Magic Real*, neither *Harry Potter* nor *The Lord of the Rings* were in the movie theaters. The stories of J. K. Rowling were new to me. Her words put me in a frame of mind I hadn't experienced for years. J.R.R. Tolkien, on the other hand, was an author I had encountered when in my early 20s, long before his works became required reading in public schools or anyone would even dare attempt to put the epic tale on film. The inspiration of the magic of the former drew me back to that of the latter. It was this feeling of wonderment that drove me to writing *Making Magic Real*.

The Lord of the Rings and *Harry Potter* have now become moviemaking history. It is amazing what modern cinematographers can do. The computer animation and special effects have become so perfect, they are indistinguishable from reality. I love the screen adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*, but there is one chapter of Tolkien's work that was left out. More than any other source in magic literature, the study of the character of Tom Bombadil has shaped my idea of what a magician is and what his powers are. For those who have not read the novel, let me give you a brief description of good old Tom.

Early on in their travels, Frodo and his companions encounter the old forest and the house of Tom Bombadil. When Merry falls into the clutches of Old Man Willow, it is Tom Bombadil who rescues him. He seems to be master of all around him. He and his wife Goldberry take in the hobbits and offer their gracious hospitality. After a while, Tom engages Frodo in a conversation about the Ring. Frodo finds himself talking freely about Bilbo and the history of the ring and, when asked, readily hands it over to Tom. Tom examines it, smiles and places

it on his finger. The hobbits are astonished to see that he doesn't disappear! Then he spins it in the air where it vanishes in a flash! Frodo panics, but instantly Tom hands the ring back to him. Frodo checks it out carefully to make sure it is OK, then puts it away. The ring appears to have no power over Tom Bombadil. Instead, Tom treats the ring as an ordinary object totally under his control. He behaves more like a magician than any other character in the book. A ring that can shape the destiny of the earth becomes a plaything in his hands!

Later, at The Council of Elrond, we learn more about Tom Bombadil. There is much more to him than a happy, dancing old man. His names throughout history were legend. The elves called him Iarwain Ben-adar, oldest and fatherless. The dwarves called him Forn and the Northern men called him Orald. He was there when time began. He is ageless.

Upon hearing of the great power of his friend, Frodo poses the question of whether or not he could be given the ring for safe keeping. Given his power, the question seems to be a logical one. Gandalf, however, explains that even though the ring has no power over him, he has no power over the ring. He cannot alter or destroy it. Even worse, he would not care about it and would soon forget about it or throw it away. Such things have no hold on his mind. "He is his own master."

This, my friends, is the key to the question of just where we fit in. Consider the Ring to represent the paranormal, the occult, the supernatural. As magicians, we are Tom Bombadil! We are masters of the earth and the things thereof. We control just that, but that is enough! We are able to take the normal things of life and do incredible things with them. We make magic with what really is!

Stop for a second and think about the dynamic world we live in. Look at our computer technology and the incredible leaps mankind has made in the last century. The basic "stuff" it is all made from has been here since the beginning of time. Microchips did not rain down from the heavens. Space aliens did not bring medical advancements to us. We did it all ourselves. *We are our own masters!*

Like Tom Bombadil, we needn't concern ourselves about the supernatural. We needn't pretend we have powers we don't have. Most importantly, we needn't feel guilty about deceiving anyone. As

you will shortly see, magic is far above that. Magic is a true art. It is a thing unto itself that never demands excuses for its existence. When real magic is accomplished, it is precisely that.



vi.

Making Real Magic

What I am about to discuss in this chapter has always seemed so very simple to me, yet I have never seen it addressed before. To me, it is the most fundamental consideration in magic. It addresses the question, how can magic be real? How can we perform magic so that it is not the art of *deception*?

My answer is in the following definition. *Magic is the art of creating mystery and wonder.* The first key word is *mystery*. There is no *mystery* in true miracles! Since real miracles happen because of supernatural power, they explain themselves! It is only when there are no such powers at play that mystery can exist! The idea is obvious, but let me give you some examples.

If God created the universe, he could certainly part the Red Sea. Yes, it was a wonderful occurrence for the Israelites, but it was not a mystery. Certainly a God who can speak all things into being can make a small part of them do as he wills.

Many people believed that Houdini could de-materialize. If that had been true, he would not have been a magician. He would have been a mystic! There would have been no mystery to how he got out of boxes and other restraints. He simply dematerialized! Only by knowing that he didn't have those powers do we have wonder.

If a man truly had telepathic abilities and stood on stage telling everyone their inner-most thoughts, the mystery element would vanish. Everyone would understand that he is really using telepathic abilities to accomplish his mind reading. They might be startled to see this power actually existed, but the question of *how* it was done would be answered.

Mystery, on the other hand, means doing the impossible. It im-

plies the inability to fathom out a solution. The appeal of the magician is that he or she is able to accomplish something that an ordinary mortal should not be able to do. Please ponder this thought in depth. The reason mystery penetrates into our very souls is it gives hope that unsolvable problems in life are solvable. The wonder of magic is that it tangibly demonstrates that dreams can become reality. If a magician is mortal and can make magic, then the audience, who is also mortal, has hope!

We owe it to our audiences and ourselves to do real magic. We should not be trying to raise ourselves above the level of our audience. We need to show them that we are just like them and can still do these things. We want to be an example of how human endeavor and ingenuity can achieve great results. We want to demonstrate that our world is their world with the boundaries expanded.

The natural instinct of our spectators falls directly into this line of thinking. Am I alone in having members of my audience approach me after a performance saying, "That was a wonderful show" I have no idea how you did it!" Notice the language. They do not say, "Where did you get such wonderful powers?" Instead they say, "How can you do those things?"

I have often used the line; "I do not have a sixth sense. I just use the normal five senses in an extra special way!" Audiences love to hear that. They love to hear that you are working with the same abilities they have, only honed through years of practice and study. They do not want to think you were blessed with a gift; they want to hear they have all the same aptitudes you have and, with practice, could channel them into something just as spectacular. Tell them that and not only will they appreciate your talents more, but they will love you as a person.

So then, what is the bottom line of what I am saying? Magic, as I have defined it, is not doing the supernatural or even pretending to do the supernatural. It is doing the *impossible*. Since the impossible can only happen if the limitations of our physical world exist, there is no deception. By implication, the magician does not have special powers. What he does have is the special *ability* to do the impossible. Notice I did not say the *illusion* of the impossible. Since the magician starts at point A and the impossible is at point B, if he gets there, then

he has accomplished it! It is *not* an illusion. In a very real sense, he has done the impossible!

When you look at something that's red, it really isn't. What you are seeing is the color red being reflected back to you from the white light that has struck the object. The object has absorbed all the colors *except* red and that is what you see. So, in reality, the object is everything *but* red. Likewise, when you look at the physical world, you see only a tiny, minute portion of it. You can only see the surface of matter, which represents only the tiniest part of its whole. You are missing more than 99% of what there is. When you look at the stars at night, you are seeing the light that shone from them far in the distant past. Some of them may not even exist anymore.

The world as we see and experience it is not what we think. Our perception of sights, sounds, smells and other senses can be altered by many factors. Reality is only what we believe it to be at a given moment. To control another person's perception is to control another person's reality. If you can make another person's reality into something wonderful, you can do real magic.

In *Making Magic Real*, I attempted to get the reader to convince himself the magic he was doing was actually real. It was, and still is, my philosophy that if the artist believes he is doing the real thing, the audience will believe it also. I suggested simple effects using ideomotor reflexes to begin that study. By causing the effect to happen by just thinking it, the performer is really using the power of his mind to make the magic.

It is my goal in *Making Real Magic* to take this belief system one step further. It is my intention to convince the reader that a real magical world does exist and that he can be part of it. By altering your audience's perception and their reality, you can create a new world designed after your own fabrication. If your intentions are honorable, that world will be wonderful and everlasting. The magic you do today will live on with your audience forever. What you give them will not only bring about a moment's delight, but memories and aspirations that become a permanent part of their lives.

I look for *magical* moments constantly. I remember seeing Jason Robards Jr. in a recording session in my friends' studio. He was recording a new 20-second version of a 30-second airline commercial

he had already recorded before. The new one was shorter and his lines only amounted to less than 15 seconds. Still, as everyone was scurrying about setting up microphones and baffles, I watched him pace back and forth repeating his lines over and over again. This man, who was one of the best dramatic stage actors of our time, was giving every last ounce of his abilities to do the best job he was capable of for a simple airline commercial! I remember thinking, "If everyone worked this hard at what they did, how could they not possibly succeed?" It was a magic moment.

As a drummer, I was very excited to see one of my favorite artists, Max Roach, perform with the Yale choir in New Haven. Max was using a set of drumsticks that had white plastic tips on them. During the very first number, one of the tips flew off the drumstick. I was waiting for him to switch the stick for a new one (there was a bag of spare sticks on a stand on the kit) but he never did. When the first number was over, I certainly expected him to make the change then, but he didn't. He continued using the same pair of sticks throughout the concert! Everything sounded perfect. He went with what was dealt to him and didn't let a small technical problem get in his way. He accepted it in stride and actually embraced the problem! Again, the moment was magical.

Think of how many lessons you can learn from the magic around you. More importantly, think of how your *real magic* can make an impression on those you touch!



vii.

Drama

Imagine going to an action movie that stars a superhero. The hero faces villain after villain and defeats them all. He is never in danger, he never has close calls and he never faces any problems getting the bad guys. No one ever comes close to killing James Bond and Batman never gets in trouble. Would you enjoy the flick? I think not. That is not good storytelling and it is not entertaining, but isn't that just what a lot of magicians do? They walk on stage with a superior attitude and present their magic as if the only goal is to show off. There is no *drama*. It can become boring very quickly.

There is an old rule for a successful story. Get the hero up in a tree, keep him up in the tree, get him down from the tree. You have to have conflict and suspense to achieve relief and satisfaction from a book, film or story. Even music has these qualities if you know what to look for. A root chord in a song goes nowhere. A five chord with the seventh added screams to go back to the root. It needs resolution. In most paintings, there is a theme. The theme itself may show conflict or resolution. Art has to *do* something to you. It has to make you *feel*.

Over 75 years after his death, Houdini still holds the title of the ultimate magician in most people's minds. He was a great magician, but it was his escapes that earned him this reputation. Many would say that was because his feats were death defying, but in truth, only a small percentage of these were so. What was more significant was the *challenge* nature of many of his escapes. The audience wanted to see if he would *win*! They wanted to see if he could beat the challenger and come out on top. He was the hero.

They chained him up (got him up in a tree), he struggled (stayed in the tree) and escaped (got out of the tree)! That is a perfect sce-

nario for drama.

You don't have to be an escape artist to create this kind of drama. You can do it with any kind of magic. Years ago, I produced a video called *Challenge Magic*. The name was not an accident. I had long since discovered that my magic and mentalism were most powerful if I played up how *impossible* the effects were. Rather than talk about telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, etc., I would build up how my effects were done under *test conditions* making it impossible for me to cheat.

In *Mind Mysteries*, look at how I deal with Challenge Mind Reading. I use the *cancellation principle* to void out any devises as to how I might know the spectator's card, and in the process, build up the impossibility of the challenge. I try to get the audience to the point that they are so convinced I couldn't know the card that I must be kidding. Then, when I finally blurt out the name of the card, the audience is stunned. I am a hero!

This is my solution as to one way to add drama to your magic. Notice that it goes against one of magic's golden rules, which is, "Never tell the audience ahead of time what you are going to do." These kinds of "magic truisms" sometimes leave a lot to be desired. Sure, surprise can be wonderful, but if the only reason you don't let your audience know ahead of time what you intend to do is because they might catch you, then your magic might not be strong enough! Even if you get away with your trick, they will probably know that you *sucker punched* them when they weren't paying attention! If your audience says, "Do that again," it may not be because they were so impressed. Instead, they might be thinking, "You did that when I wasn't paying attention. Do it again now and I will catch you!"

Regardless of the reason, if your audience doesn't know what you are attempting and how impossible it is, then how can they root for you and want you to win? How can they make you a hero if they don't even know you are in trouble?

The challenge aspect is just one way to add drama to your magic. Although many magicians consider David Copperfield to be a bit hokey at times, I love his work. Obviously, so do millions of other people around the world, as David is, by far and away, the most popular magician who ever lived. I can get as caught up in his vignettes as I

can when watching a sentimental movie. Of course I know stories of his childhood or his grandfather's sayings are probably not true, but neither are the actor's lines in a play. The underlying *feelings* he stirs up are as valid as those are in real life.

If I cry during his Snow performance piece, my tears are as real as when my daughter said her first words. When an illusion apparently goes wrong, my heart can skip a beat in the same way as when I am cut off the road by a crazy driver. Art can give you the feeling of experiencing things without really having to experience them. The feeling is, however, just as strong as it would be in reality!

To treat magic as a simple demonstration of *look what I can do and you can't* is the supreme insult to our art. Do that and we are back to puzzles again. You must first give consideration to what you want to accomplish *emotionally* before you begin any magic demonstration. You have to know how you want your audience to react. You have to know what you want them to think of you. You have to know what you want them to believe and you have to know what you want them to take away after the performance. You are doing the impossible. Your magic should be an *event*!



viii.

The Power of Simplicity

Let's go back in time to the first magician. Perhaps it was some ancient extrovert who, having a little spare time on his hands, wanted to impress friends by doing something special. Maybe he picked up a stone and pretended to put it into his left hand, while really retaining it in his right hand. Then he opened his left hand and it was gone! Voila! Then he reached over and plucked the stone from the air. Since his audience had never seen a magic trick before, we can only imagine what effect this would have had on them. Certainly, even this basic effect, if done with any degree of finesse, would be startling to someone new to magic. He becomes our first magician.

Now we fast-forward in history. How long would it take to get to the point where the magician decides to elaborate on his trick with a second, secret rock? Maybe he makes the first rock disappear like before, then shows a duplicate rock in his mouth or some other unlikely place!

Again, fast-forward. Maybe now our magician has thought about using multiple rocks with another secret rock in play. Perhaps he does some type of hand-to-hand transposition or similar trick. Think of how this ruse might affect a primitive audience with no knowledge of magical principles.

Simplicity in magic, although talked about frequently, is rarely understood. Many books tell us the more direct the method, the better the effect. Then, in contrast, all the new books and videos feature incredibly difficult and complex moves or apparatus gimmicked to the hilt. A magician doing basic magic is frowned upon as a beginner. Yet comparing these basic effects to the more complex routines, you will find the simpler ones usually have a much greater and more direct

effect on the audience! That is where the art lies. We want to obtain the maximum magical effect for our audience. To do so with simple methods is not preferred because it is more satisfying, but because, by nature, it is more magical!

I always use exaggeration when reasoning out a problem. If you take a dilemma to the limits, you can usually find the direction to move in. Let's work with an example. For years there has been a trick on the market called the Giant Botania. It consists of a large chromed tube, which is supposedly shown empty. (Actually, the hole in the center is obviously much too small for the tube, which additionally is tapered on the other end!) The tube is placed on a table and lifted. A large, springy bouquet of feather flowers pops into view. Even a child can see the flowers were in the tube to begin with. Although the colors are beautiful and the effect is fast and flashy, it is hardly a mystery.

What were the origins of this effect? That is the kicker. Ancient magicians would plant a seed in the ground and place some type of cover over it. When lifted, the seed had sprouted into a young seedling. Covering and showing it again, the plant would grow bigger. This was continued until a full-sized plant was produced, blooming with flowers!

Look at the difference in effect. The first example is obviously a trick tube and fake flowers that fools no one. The second effect represents life! The magician causes a plant to grow! Do you see the power in that? In essence, a magician with this ability would be able to feed millions by growing crops instantly in areas where people are starving. It is an example of *worthwhile* magic that also is quite impossible as the magic happens on the ground.

To accomplish this magical effect, however, required the magician to sneak the various plants in and out of the ground. That was no easy feat with people surrounding him. It required great sleight of hand of the *simplest* nature. Most beginning magicians would think this type of magic would be impossible.

Likewise, I am often amused at the comments I hear from newcomers to the field of mentalism. The first books they purchase are Corinda's *13 Steps to Mentalism* and Annemann's *Practical Mental Effects*. They read of the billet work and throw up their hands in despair, thinking it will never work. Yet, workers such as Bert Reese

and Charles Foster spent their lives doing just this kind of work for presidents and heads of state.

I have heard magicians put down basic fundamentals simply because they cannot do them. One recently told me he never uses the one-ahead principle because it is too obvious to the audience. The comment was absurd! The one-ahead principle is one of the most useful and wonderful ploys in magic and to have it condemned because a performer is not capable of exercising it correctly is like a pianist putting down Rachmaninoff because he is incapable of playing his music!

Always look for the most *direct line* to achieve the effect you want. If that line means having to do a move that you are incapable of performing – *practice* until you can do it! I never learn a bunch of moves just for the sake of learning them, but if I find an effect of great value that utilizes a move I can't do, then I will stop at nothing to perfect it. For those who feel that they have to earn their place in magic by physically doing something the *muggles* are incapable of, let them start here.



ix.

Seeing Through the Eyes of the Audience

One of the biggest mistakes a magician can make is seeing things through his own eyes instead of the eyes of the audience. More than any other single problem, this is the one I see most often. Magicians hang around together, do magic for each other, discuss the latest books and videos and lose sight completely of how a layperson sees things and thinks.

Always think *effect* first. Try to understand what a person with no magical knowledge would make of your new trick or method. Do not assume they know things that they shouldn't know. Even if they do have a bit of magic knowledge, you can completely sidetrack that issue if you don't lead them down the path to the solution. I have to use a personal example again to make my point. It concerns mentalism, but its examination can be applied to any magic.

I recently put my *Stainless Steel Blindfold* back on the market. In the accompanying booklet of instructions, I put in my favorite routine based on the work of Kuda Bux, perhaps the greatest exponent of blindfold work ever. I analyzed his show and tried to have my routine follow the same logic.

Kuda did not try to use clever throw-offs or alternate *methods* in his blindfold work. Instead, after his head was totally wrapped up, making sight impossible, he began his demonstrations in a straightforward manner. He started by duplicating a picture someone had drawn. Next he duplicated a spectator's signature. Finally, he used a rifle to shoot targets of the audience's choice, one by one. The blindfold was removed and the show was over.

What is significant to note is that the act got proportionally harder to do from the *spectators'* point of view, not his own! For Kuda, duplicating a signature or shooting a balloon with a BB gun was no harder than drawing the first design, but, from the *spectators' point of view*, what Kuda did got proportionally harder as he went along.

Try to imagine what looks the most impossible from your audiences' eyes. Over the years, there have been numerous methods published for doing the Torn and Restored Newspaper. They are all very good and use many different methods. From the spectator's standpoint, however, they are all the same. A newspaper is torn and then restored. That's it!

When I approached this problem, I decided to really think it through and forget about method. It was clear to me the effect would look more impossible if the newspaper could be returned at the end. That was good, but still didn't cancel out the possible solution that perhaps the newspaper had been switched. I next worked out a way where a spectator could sign the paper before it was torn and restored. That was great, but there was one more angle I had overlooked. Why not allow the spectator to choose any page out of the newspaper to work with? That would be the finishing touch, as it would appear the paper could not be gimmicked.

I shot for that goal and finally came up with a clean method to accomplish it. This trick, more than any other that I have created, shows how studying the effect first can lead to something very special. What's more, the method actually is much simpler (although not easier) than most on the market.

Let me give more one final example. On my recent video series, *Mind Mysteries*, I performed a number of card effects using my Break-through Card System. Compared to most card magic, these effects are absurdly easy to do. Yet I have received letter after letter from magicians from all over the world telling me they have added these tricks to their repertoire and they are the strongest card magic they have ever done. I am not trying to blow my own horn or inflate my ego, but am pointing out that these effects were developed by constantly looking at how *normal* people see things and what would look impossible to them.

It is so easy to start with sleights and gimmicks and try to weave

magic around them. Try to always start with the magic first and worry about method later.



x.

The Magician in the Physical World

This is going to be a very interesting study for me to see how the material in this chapter is received. I am hoping beyond hope that you, the reader, will actually try what I am about to suggest in real life. Please read what follows with an open mind.

We live in a physical world. I have already given my understanding of how we fit into this world as magicians and what I believe we should try to accomplish. I have talked about Tom Bombadil and how this literary example can lead us to be masters of our physical surroundings. But how many of us are not masters at all? How many of us are actually at *odds* with our physical universe? Are you wondering what I am talking about? Let me explain.

How often do you grab something with twice the force necessary? How often do you bump into things or knock things over? How often do you break things because you tried to make it turn in the wrong way or forced something to go where it wasn't meant to go? Have you ever put something down where it didn't fit and it fell off the table? Are you starting to understand? Have you ever noticed that some people manhandle everything they touch and are extremely clumsy while others have a delicacy of movement? Do you ever walk into someone's home where everything is bruised and broken while others have the nicest possessions in perfect condition? Are you in harmony with nature or constantly fighting against it?

Being a master of the physical universe, we, as magicians, ought to have this gentleness of touch. I am not referring to constantly waving your hands around in delicate gestures, but we ought to be able to

pick up articles and handle them in a smooth and refined manner. We ought to be *in harmony* with our surroundings. I have studied how certain television programs and motion pictures use close-up shots of an actor's hands to arrest your attention and imply the expertise of the person making the motions.

One of the most remarkable uses of this kind of editing was common in the old television series, *Mission Impossible*. Close-up shots of Barney's hands while he altered some electronic piece of equipment or built an ingenious device were spellbinding. The producers were able to impart a feeling of great skill by the simple motion of a hand turning a screwdriver or securing an electronic contact. Each movement was precise and perfect with no wasted effort or undo force.

Not only can a feeling of expertise be projected through ones hands, but other emotions as well. I first noticed this phenomenon in my dear wife, Lisa. She loves to decorate our home and is constantly adding and changing the look of rooms.

One day I watched her carefully lay out a new configuration of figurines and candles on a table. As she placed each item delicately down, she actually caressed them as if to show her love of their beauty and her fondness for them. I remember thinking how sweet to be able to love elegance in that way and what a wonderful quality that was.

On the other hand, contrast that with a person who is obviously having a bad day and is throwing everything around! Perhaps you have been guilty yourself of steaming over some matter of concern and letting your anger flow through your hands taking its revenge on the innocent matter you came into contact with. Many of us don't even require a mood swing to be guilty of maligning our physical universe.

Before I offer my remedy, let me ask you a final question. Do you have good and bad days for your magic? Do you find that sometimes moves and sleights just seem to flow effortlessly, while other days everything seems to get hung up and caught on the edges? Do you have days where you really have to work hard to make everything go right?

I have pondered this problem for a long time. I have watched myself in a mirror for hours, trying to evaluate what I am doing, either right or wrong. I have practiced moving slower, smoother, lighter and

a hundred other ways. They are artificial. They fail the second you take your mind off them and they require conscious effort that you lose the moment you apply your thinking to what you are saying and your spectators.

In *Making Magic Real*, I discussed an automatic way to have your subconscious take over the conscious work of hiding sleights and angles. By making your magic real for yourself, you are able to concentrate solely on that belief and let your inner self take over the work on the other end. What I'm about to propose works in a similar way. Once you practice it for a while, you will see a profound change in the way you move and act. You will also see an increased sureness in your sleight of hand and a noticeable increase in the ease of learning new moves. Most importantly, you will see a change in how your audience accepts your magic!

My simple discovery is to go through your life each day doing your daily routine, *trying to make as little noise as possible*. That's right. Try to make no noise (or as little as possible) as you walk, pick up articles, cook, drive, etc. Before you throw something at your computer screen and demand your money back, first hear me out.

The outward result of a person's incompatibility with nature is noise! It is only when you are using too much force and bumping into things that you make a lot of noise. Look at wild animals. Even the largest and bulkiest walk and move more silently than most humans.

If you constantly try to be less noisy, you will find yourself altering your life in a lot of subtle and different ways. You will look at what you are doing. You will handle items in a slower and more deliberate way. You will think ahead before making actions. You will grip items with a lighter but surer touch. You will be, in overall movement, more deliberate and accurate. There will develop a certain *calmness* about your style.

You will be aware of how things lie and where you need to grip them to pick them up cleanly. You will put delicate items in your hands in such a way as to not risk injury to them. You will notice where you are about to put something down and whether there is enough room for it to fit. You will *plan* your actions a split second before you make them.

At first, doing this will be a conscious effort. You might only try it

for a limited time (perhaps an hour or so) for the first few days. As you practice, you will find it becoming more automatic. Whenever you do break your stride and make too much noise, you will become instantly aware of it. After awhile, as you become more proficient, you will find yourself moving in a new way!

Allow me to reverse examine what I am talking about. Look and notice people around you. Who are the ones who make the most noise? Aren't they the insecure, the impatient and the nervous? It is the people who really seem to have their act together who are the most deliberate and quiet.

There are secondary benefits to this exercise. Your body is a whole and it is almost impossible to have a temperamental disposition if your movements are calm. It becomes almost mandatory to do other things in life with a similar attitude. If you find yourself moving in a more orderly and calm manner, you may just start to speak that way, too! Speech patterns depend on our disposition and a calm one will be reflected.

You may also lose your temper less often. Not only our speech patterns, but also the manner in which we handle objects, can be determined by our tempers. When we are mad, it usually results in noise, either verbal or physical. Making a conscious effort to reduce the noise we make has the reverse effect of deflating our built-up emotions before they can explode.

Other secondary benefits will also become automatic. If you make noise in the morning because you are too lazy to put your slippers fully on your feet and trip over the slackness, you will take the time to lean over and slip them on correctly. Since sloppiness promotes noise because of things getting in your way and your impatience trying to find something you are looking for, you might find yourself tidying up a bit. It is incredible what will happen if you follow my advice.

If you are thinking this is all nonsense, just try it! I never read of this concept anywhere nor did anyone tell me about it. I came up with the idea myself just out of common sense. You will see after only a short time that it works, but you have to do your part. You have to actually *practice* what I have said. The wonderful thing is no one will know you are doing it! You can go about your life developing this skill without drawing any attention to yourself. What attention you may draw

will be a noticeable difference in the attitude people have toward you. You may suddenly find them more attentive and respectful.

What are the magic benefits? You will see, once you get into your *silent/calm mode* and begin to perform. Your fingers will be surer of their grip. You won't brush over half-mastered sleights done clumsily. Instead, you will take the time to learn them properly and the learning process will come easier. You will *look at what you are doing* thereby directing your spectators to look also! They will follow your hands with a new respect and you will appear to be a master of your craft.

The effectiveness of your misdirection will also increase a thousand per cent. Coupled with the *magic state of mind*, you will automatically draw attention to where you want it (since the magic is real for you) and your movements will be more convincing than ever! There is no down side. You can only win if you follow my advice.

I am profoundly certain of this concept and I pray you will at least give it a try.



xi.

Osterlind's Amazing Memory Demonstration

Whenever I buy a magic book, even if it is a book on magic theory, I still like to get at least one good effect out of it that I can personally use. This routine is one of my favorites and I have developed it over a period of many years. It comes right out of Corinda's *13 Steps to Mentalism*, but, even if you already know it, there are many professional additions that will be new. If you aren't familiar with memory systems, you are about to have a door opened that can easily enrich your life forever! I hope you like it!

EFFECT: The magician numbers a paper from 1 to 20 along the left, long side. (*Note: in Corinda, the routine uses 30 objects. Tommy and Liz Tucker used 15. I find 20 to be around the right length for this routine.*) He hands the paper to a spectator who he designates as his *secretary*! Members of the audience call out objects that are either in the room or elsewhere. As each object is called out, the secretary is instructed to record the item next to its number. As he goes along, the magician often asks the spectators to give additional details about the objects. For instance, if a car is called out, the magician may ask for the make, model and color of the car. For a soft drink, the magician might ask what kind of soft drink, whether it is diet or not and what size bottle or can. Each of these additional items is recorded.

Finally, when 20 items have been recorded, the magician announces that he has memorized them all! This seems particularly impossible because of all the additional information and the fact that the magician was joking around with the audience and hardly seem-

ing to pay attention. Still, when a number is called, the magician knows the object immediately and *all* the details! He might even know who called out that particular object! As each object is named, the secretary is instructed to put a check mark next to that object. When about half of the list has been completed, the magician announces that in order to save time, he will call off the entire list – *backwards* – and also say which items have been already checked off and which have not! This is exactly what he does, giving the impression that he must be the greatest memory expert ever!

METHOD: You really do memorize the list! That is the incredible secret. You also memorize all the other additional information. You can do it and it is easy!

I have already mentioned the routine comes from Corinda's *13 Steps to Mentalism*. This routine is a perfect example of why you should own that book if you don't already; it's full of gems. I first learned this feat from there. Over the years, I have studied and learned the systems in Harry Lorayne's books. I use his when I want to permanently remember something. For this feat, however, I still use the original method.

You must commit to memory the following word list. Since it is based on a rhyming principle that connects it with its number, it is very easy. No more than an hour should be necessary to memorize this entire list. Once you've remembered it, you can move on to the next phase.

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 1 is a gun | 11 comes from Devon |
| 2 is a shoe | 12 is a shelf |
| 3 is a flea | 13 is skirting |
| 4 is a saw | 14 is courting |
| 5 is a hive | 15 is lifting |
| 6 is a trick | 16 is sweet sixteen |
| 7 goes to heaven | 17 cannot be seen |
| 8 is a gate | 18 is baiting |
| 9 is out of line | 19 is pining |
| 10 is a pen | 20 is sentry |

In order to remember the list of objects, you will *link* each item to the word representing each number. When an object is called out, you will form a *picture* connecting that object to the word. Suppose someone calls out *bowling ball* for object number one. You would picture a gun and see yourself *shooting* the bowling ball! You *must* see the picture in your mind! You should *visualize* how the ball would shatter when hit by the bullet! As soon as you have that picture in your mind, *forget it!* That's right, forget it. Move on to number two.

Suppose someone says cotton candy for number two. The word for number two is shoe. So you would see yourself stuffing cotton candy into your shoe! The more ridiculous the picture you form, the easier it will be to remember it later. Now forget it.

For number three, let's suppose someone said television. In that case, I would picture a flea dancing merrily away on top of a television set. Remember that you must see the picture in your mind *vividly* before forgetting it.

Let me give you a list of all the connections you can use for your list. These are the most logical, but if you come up with something better on your own, use that!

See yourself shooting the object with a *gun*.

Stuff the object called into a *shoe*.

A *flea* dances on the object called.

You saw the selected object in half.

A bee *hive* is on top of the object with thousands of bees flying around.

You pull the object out of a top hat (*trick*).

The object is carried off to *heaven* by two angels.

The object is on a *gate*.

The object is *out-of-line* with two others of the same kind.

You write on the object with a *pen*.

The object comes in the mail from the English town of *Devon*.

The object sits on a *shelf* in your house.

The object hangs from a nail on the *skirting* of your room.

The object blocks a *courting* couple's kiss by getting in between their lips.

You are *lifting* the object, balancing it on your fingertips.

The object is covered in *sweet (sixteen)* honey.

The object is tiny and you look at it with a microscope because *it cannot be seen*.

You put the object on a fishhook as *bait (ing)*.

You are reporting (*pinning*) to the lost and found office that you lost the object.

A *sentry* stands on guard with the object instead of a rifle.

To see for yourself how this works, prepare a list of 20 objects. Make the memory associations in the form of vivid pictures as you have learned. Remember to really see each picture and then forget it.

Now, if you have done what I have said, you are in for a shock. Think of the number one and a gun. See if the picture you associated with the gun doesn't *instantly* pop into your head! You can't help remember the object for that number if you made the picture correctly! You will find that you can go through the entire list and each picture will be there. Not only will you know the objects in order, but you will also be able to name the object that goes with any number called out. The first time you do this, you will feel as though you have a new power! And you do!

This basic routine is already a wonderful one. I have, however, built up the routine to take advantage of other factors making it seem even more remarkable. Let me go through the working and explain each aspect.

ROUTINE: Use a pad or clipboard to make a list of 20 numbers. It is better to use a full size sheet of paper so there will be plenty of room for your *secretary* to write. Hand the pad to that person making sure you will have someone whom will cooperate.

Explain that you will need different people to call out the names of objects. The objects can be things in the room they can see or items outside the room. The objects can be large or small, animals, whatever they can picture.

Look at a person and have him name an object. Have your secretary write the name of the object next to number one. You, meanwhile, are making your memory association for that object and number one (gun). Ask a *different person* for a second object and have that recorded on the list next to number two. Continue along creating

the list and making your associations. Make sure you use a number of different people to call out the objects. After you have gotten about five, start to ask the spectators for particulars about the objects. If someone names a tie, ask what color and what designs are on it. If they name a watch, ask them what make and what time the watch is set on. You will find that these details will *automatically* be stored in your memory along with the object. You will not believe it until you try it, but even if the particulars are quite complicated, they will come right back into your mind!

There is another advantage in working this way. It will take your secretary longer to write down all this information, giving you more time to make your association and create a good picture! You don't have to expand on all the items, but do so fairly often. You will also find that the audience will start to come up with funny, additional information that will get laughs. This not only makes the routine more entertaining, but also makes it even easier for you to do. (The general rule in memory work is the more outlandish a picture is, the easier it is to remember) Continue until you have all 20 numbers covered.

Now you announce that you have been trying to memorize the information. Tell your audience that if they name any number, you will try to remember the object at that number. If you played your part correctly, they will think you are kidding, as you seemed to be too busy laughing at the details and joking around to have been really paying attention. Have them say a number and you instantly call out the object. They will be stunned! Tell the secretary to put a mark next to that number and call another. Again you name the object instantly. If there were additional details about the object, name all those. You will find that you will have full recall of all those details. But there is still more!

You will also find that most of the time, you will be able to recall *who* called out what objects! That is something else you can draw attention to as you work. If anyone changed their mind, said something stupid, anything at all, it will all come back to you! It is absolutely wonderful. But, believe it or not, there is *still more* and this is what I am most proud of!

After you have gone through about half the objects, announce that to save time, you will name the entire list – *backwards*! Addition-

ally, you will tell what objects have already been called out and which ones haven't! You start with number 20 and begin to work backwards through the list. You will find that in addition to knowing all the objects, you will simply know what numbers and objects have already been called! I know it seems uncanny, but it just happens! By the time you get to number one, there won't be a person in the room who won't believe you are a mental genius.

And now, after giving you all that, would you believe I have one last idea? I hope you have seen how this routine follows so many of the thoughts I have outlined in *Making Real Magic*. Here is one more final idea that really puts the capper on everything.

As you work backward from 20, when you get to a number near the beginning, pretend to forget it! Make sure you pick a number that hasn't been called out. Continue until you have named all the remaining numbers. After your applause, mention the number you missed and ask your spectator to *look* at it. Give them a stare, as though you were seeing into their mind, and *name it*! It seems to imply you were able to get the object you missed by reading his mind! It's as if you said, "Well since I forgot the word, I better use one of my other powers!" This is the perfect ending to the routine.

I have used this for some of the most intelligent people from around the world. This is one of the most valuable items you will ever learn. Once you see the potential, I hope you will read some of Harry Lorayne's books and use these memory aids in other areas of your (and your family's) life.



xii.

Making Magic Your Own

The following essay was written and posted on the L&L Publishing discussion board in 2003. Because I firmly believe in these concepts and since it seems to fit the character of Making Real Magic, it is offered here as a bonus chapter.

There is a big secret in the successful performance of magic. You have to make the magic you do your own. The successful magician makes every move, gesture and mannerism so natural that his act shines. The speech or (perish the word) “patter” of his performance must reflect the way he really talks and expresses himself. The magic has to look like he created it.

The problem is that most magicians get their effects from books and (in today’s modern world) videos. In the former, the reader would have to imagine how the effect should look and work it up for himself. In the latter, even that aspect of self-input is missing. Is it any wonder then that we see so many magicians who act, speak and perform exactly like the originator of the effect? And yet, they never shine like he does.

To be fair, it is difficult to divorce oneself from the original performance of a trick, especially if it was impressive. Perhaps it is the fear that something may be changed that is vital to the working and will lower its impact or entertainment value. That is a real concern. So then, how do we take these two diametrically opposed ideas and blend them together?

For years I have been expounding the greatness of *The Tarbell Course in Magic* and why it’s study is so important to the developing magician. The topic of this essay is how to make your performance of

magic not only personal, but very special as well. Once again I have to fall back on some of the principles laid out by Tarbell to make my argument.

Although magic has come very far since Harlan Tarbell took pen in hand, I still see many magicians falling into the same traps that he expounded upon. The main purpose of his course was to make magicians real magicians - not just someone doing tricks.

As Tarbell himself put it, "A magician is not a magician because he knows tricks, but because he knows magic - the principles, the fundamentals." He taught the "science" of magic. Again quoting Tarbell, "Another reason I give you the science of magic is that I want you to be able to do other tricks besides the ones I give you. I want you to be able to originate new methods and even new tricks. You can do this easily if you really know the science of magic."

As you read through the course, you constantly find absolute "gems" of advice that are ageless. I discover new bits of guidance and logic whenever I pick up one of the worn-out volumes. I have based my "fundamentals" on what I have learned there.

The first fundamental sounds almost too foolish to mention and yet is a primary pitfall in magic. *You must know the effect you are trying to create!* There is a subcategory to that rule. *Is the effect worthwhile enough to bother with?* If your audience cannot clearly understand the effect or what you are accomplishing, then it contains a major flaw. If the effect achieved does not impress the audience or appear impossible, it is also useless.

Remember that magic is a *performance* art! Both of these problems might be solved with better routining, but sometimes an effect is just not worth pursuing. A practical example of this is the hours spent by some card workers to master every sleight they encounter without regard for its practical use. I am not suggesting that every individual doesn't have the right to do what he wants, but to foster some of the card tricks I have seen on unsuspecting laypeople does border on criminal behavior.

If the unfortunate victim does agree to watch a pasteboard miracle, he or she expects to see just that, not finger gymnastics followed by an ending that begs the question, "So just what did he do?" I am not picking on card workers here (I love a good card trick), but they do

seem to be the ones most guilty of this primary mistake. So, to begin with, try to see the effect from the layperson's line of sight and determine whether the trick is worth doing in the first place. Does it create a miracle or did you just dazzle the onlookers with speed and dexterity until they were too tired to follow where the card, coin, ball or whatever went? That is juggling, not magic.

The second fundamental is almost as crucial. *Recognize there are many methods to accomplish the same thing. Learn all the methods.* Again, this may seem like common sense, but not to many magicians. I have seen some performers use the most excruciatingly difficult maneuvering to do something that could be done in a much more natural, open and simple manner.

I will not name names, but I can remember one book I read years ago using a mathematical principle to create many card tricks. The problem was that almost every trick in the book could be duplicated and improved using nothing but a key card! Sure, the principle was clever and unexplored, but if you can't do miracles with it, why waste your time? Regardless of how clever anything is in magic, if it isn't practical, it won't cut the mustard in front of a real audience.

Combine these two fundamentals and you come up with a clear concept. *Strive to create the strongest magic you can and get to it using the simplest means possible.*

Now let me reveal my secret for not only personalizing magic created by others, but also how to create your own magic. Here is the crux of this article.

When I see a new trick in a book or video, or if I buy a piece of equipment, I first determine the first fundamental. What am I supposed to be accomplishing and is it worth it? If I believe it is so or can be so, I study it carefully. I learn it *exactly* the way the originator explains it. If it is a video trick, I try my best to duplicate it exactly as performed. Even if right in the beginning, something strikes me as being unnecessary or bad magic, I will still learn it that way.

When I feel as though I have mastered it, *I put it away!* I do my best not to think about it for a few days or even a week - or a month. I try to get it completely out of my head. Then, I practice a mind trick I have using for years. *I pretend that I invented the trick!* That's right, I trick myself into believing it was my creation. Even if my best friend

in magic gave me the trick, I take him out of it. It is mine. Then I start to scrutinize it and criticize it. Because I am my own worse critic, it's not hard. I look for all the weak points and flaws and try to improve them.

Using the principles I mentioned before, I try to get the most effect using the simplest method possible. Then I imagine myself performing this trick before the most important audience of my career with the President and the Prime Minister of England in attendance! I imagine how they would react to my trick and analyze whether it would be good enough to do in that situation. Very rarely does it come up to par.

Then the juices start kicking in and the real work begins. Sometimes I will dwell on a trick for months and wake up suddenly with a new slant. Sometimes I will see another trick that throws some light on the one I am working on. And sometimes I will get inspiration from a completely unexpected source. It might be a movie or a book with a theme that somehow lends itself to the trick.

As these thoughts start to come, it is easier to move away from the original trick as I have put some time and distance between it and myself. If the changes are minor, but significant, so be it. If, however, the entire trick needs to be re-worked so that it doesn't even resemble the original, so much the better! When it finally seems usable, I introduce it into a show. If it plays well, I leave it in and let it develop further. If it doesn't go over, out it comes until more work can be done on it. Sometimes it will go back in and sometimes not. This is why I don't often change my show, but when I do, it is usually because of something worthwhile.

I hope you can see from the above that it is next to impossible *not* to make your magic your own if you follow my lead. After devoting weeks, months or even years working on an effect, it cannot help but to be your own. You will have instilled into it part of your very soul. It will be you and when you do it you will not be copying anyone. People will want to see you for *you* and not what you do. The tricks will simply be an extension of who you are.

Then you really will be magic.

About the Author

Richard Osterlind has been a prolific performer and creator of mentalism and magic for his entire life. Besides doing scores of shows yearly for Fortune 500 companies, he's found time to create some of mentalism and magic's most



original effects. Besides the Osterlind Breakthrough Card System, he's the originator of the Slow-Motion Surrounded Center Tear, the Radar Deck, Industrial Strength Link, Thought Scan, the Osterlind Stainless Steel Blindfold, the Epitome and Ultra Boards, and many other marketed magic and mentalism effects.

His published works include *Dynamic Mysteries*, *Three Miracle Routines*, *Two Perfected Routines*, *The Very Modern Mindreader*, *The Perfected Center Tear*, and the best-selling e-book, *Making Magic Real*. He also appeared in the *Challenge Magic* video in addition to the recent best-selling *Mind Mysteries* video series from L&L Publishing.

He lives in Kentucky with his wife, Lisa, and their two daughters.

*For more of Richard Osterlind's mentalism
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